

RETAIL PRICES - JUNE QUARTER, 1956.

The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the June quarter of 1956 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases,
June Quarter, 1956.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from June Quarter, 1955.	Increase from March Quarter, 1956.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,299	166.4	4.2	1.7
Toowoomba ..	2,343	175.3	4.3	2.1
Rockhampton ..	2,327	170.3	3.4	1.4
Townsville ..	2,424	165.8	4.0	1.5
Bundaberg ..	2,280	171.1	3.6	1.3
Warwick ..	2,301	179.9	4.0	2.0

The increase of 1.7 per cent. in the "C" Series index number for Brisbane was, apart from a rise of similar magnitude in the preceding quarter, the largest since the June quarter of 1952. The latest rise brought the total increase during the twelve months ended June, 1956, to 4.2 per cent., compared with 2.0 per cent. in the preceding twelve months. In spite of the relatively large rise in the index in the most recent quarter, there was no indication of any general rise in the prices of goods sold on a freely competitive market. The rises which most affected the index were in potatoes, newspapers, tobacco and cigarettes, milk, bacon, and sugar, in that order. Potatoes have been affected by crop problems, the tobacco increase was due to higher excise duties, while milk, sugar, and newspaper prices are determined by the conditions of production rather than by the upward pressure of the market. The clothing group as a whole remained practically unchanged as it has now done for several quarters. As usual, changes in prices in the other five cities in Queensland for which the index is available were similar in magnitude and cause to those in Brisbane, with some minor variations due principally to local variations in seasonal price changes and in times of arrival of new stocks of manufactured goods.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, June Quarter, 1956.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1956.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1956.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1956.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	213.6	2.1	278.0	0.2	128.4	4.1
Toowoomba ..	239.6	2.6	280.2	1.0	125.0	3.9
Rockhampton ..	201.5	0.8	270.3	0.2	137.3	3.7
Townsville ..	195.8	0.9	277.0	0.2	137.2	4.1
Bundaberg ..	201.7	1.1	277.8	0.6	122.7	4.1
Warwick ..	226.8	2.7	280.8	0.3	131.5	4.3

The price rise of a little over 1½ per cent. in Brisbane in the latest quarter was similar to the rises in two other capital cities - Perth and Hobart. In the other three capitals, the increases were much higher and approached 3 per cent., each of these cities recording larger rises in food prices than the other cities. In each capital, the miscellaneous group showed a rise of 2 per cent. or more, but there was no significant change in clothing and footwear prices in any capital city.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, increases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for the six Queensland cities in which data are collected. In all the cities increases were recorded in prices of sugar, potatoes, eggs, bacon, and milk (except in Townsville where the winter incentive price does not apply), and decreases were recorded in prices of tea and onions, and in Rockhampton and Bundaberg beef prices also showed decreases.

Clothing and Footwear.

Small increases were recorded for the six cities in the clothing and footwear index numbers. These were mainly the result of increases in prices for women's and girls' seasonal clothing. Prices of men's and boys' clothing showed overall decreases for the six cities.

Miscellaneous.

The miscellaneous items index numbers showed increases in the six cities, the main cause of this being increases for Brisbane in the prices of tobacco and cigarettes, newspapers, and certain other miscellaneous items. (Prices of these items are collected in Brisbane only and the movements in these are applied to the other five cities.) There were also increases in the price of gas in Brisbane and of firewood in Townsville and Warwick.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased in Brisbane (0.4 per cent.), Rockhampton (2.9 per cent.), and Townsville (3.1 per cent.), but remained stationary in the other three cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in June Quarter, 1956, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton	1	0	3	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	11	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville ..	1	1	1	1	1	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	9 $\frac{1}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	10	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$		16	1	1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		15	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	4 $\frac{1}{4}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together increased during the quarter by 2d. in the £ in Toowoomba and Warwick and decreased by amounts of up to 1d. in the £ in the other three cities. Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey, and Bundaberg was still the cheapest and the only city where retail prices were lower than in Brisbane, the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane being 19s. 10d., compared with £1 1s. 1d. in Townsville.

Prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane. During June quarter the excess over Brisbane prices increased by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Toowoomba and Warwick, and decreased by amounts ranging from 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in the other three. Of the six cities, Townsville has still the highest food prices, food and groceries there costing 1s. 0 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ more than in Brisbane.

During the quarter, prices of clothing and footwear in relation to Brisbane remained unchanged in Townsville, decreased by 1d. in the £ in Rockhampton, and increased by amounts of up to 2d. in the £ in the other cities. Clothing and footwear prices are much more uniform throughout the State than prices of commodities in other sections of the index, and in the recent quarter the largest deviation from Brisbane prices was an excess of 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg. Toowoomba was 1d. in the £ less than Brisbane.

Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. The additional costs decreased during June quarter by 1½d. in the £ in Rockhampton, and by ¼d. in the £ in Toowoomba, Townsville, and Bundaberg, but increased by ¼d. in the £ in Warwick.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Following an application for the resumption of automatic adjustments and an increase in the basic wage, the Court increased the basic wage for males in all States by 10s. from June, 1956, but did not restore the quarterly adjustments.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the index number for the September quarter of 1955, but no change occurred for the December quarter of 1955. Following publication of the index numbers for the March and June quarters of 1956 the Court increased the basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females on each occasion.

The New South Wales Industrial Commission suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments from August, 1953, but resumed them in November, 1955, with the addition of the full amount indicated by the rise in the index number during the period of suspension. In the most recent quarter, an increase of 7s. for adult males in Sydney was made. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments have been continued in all quarters under special legislation, the latest increase being 7s. for adult males in Melbourne. In South Australia, the State basic wage has been pegged to the Commonwealth basic wage, the only adjustment since August, 1953, being an addition of 10s. for adult males as from June, 1956. The Western Australian Court of Arbitration made no adjustment to the basic wage after July, 1953, until August, 1955, when an increase was made on account of price rises in the June quarter. Three later increases have been made, the latest of which operated from 23rd July, 1956, the rise for adult males in Perth being 4s. 5d. In Tasmania, quarterly adjustments were suspended from August, 1953, to February, 1956, when the total increase, amounting to 17s. in Hobart, due to rises in the index number during the period of suspension, was added. Adjustments were made in the two later quarters, the latest being 4s. for adult males in Hobart, but the State Wages Boards decided to suspend automatic adjustments for a trial period thereafter.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	June Quarter, 1953.	March Quarter, 1956.	June Quarter, 1956.	Males. ^a			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. ^b
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,260	2,299	11	8	0	11	17	0	8	0	0	23. 7. 56
Sydney	2,360	2,490	2,556	12	13	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956
Melbourne	2,279	2,481	2,555	12	5	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956c
Adelaide	2,233	2,388	2,452	12	1	0	12	1	0	9	1	0	June, 1956
Perth ..	2,290	2,605	2,646	12	6	0	13	1	26	8	10	0	23. 7. 56
Hobart	2,351	2,598	2,639	12	12	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956c

a Operative from beginning of first pay-period in June, 1956. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed until August, 1953. After a period of suspension quarterly adjustments have been resumed following the scale previously used by Commonwealth Court (see above).

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BRISBANE.

8th August, 1956.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.
(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1956.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.	June, 1956.
Brisbane	863	1,079	2,251	2,206	2,221	2,223	2,260	2,299
Toowoomba	851	1,092	2,288	2,247	2,251	2,262	2,295	2,343
Rockhampton	861	1,084	2,286	2,251	2,259	2,263	2,296	2,327
Townsville	912	1,119	2,372	2,330	2,325	2,351	2,388	2,424
Bundaberg	841	1,059	2,257	2,200	2,202	2,216	2,250	2,280
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	2,264	2,220	2,233	2,237	2,274	2,312
Warwick	822	1,073	2,252	2,213	2,223	2,229	2,256	2,301

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.
(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1956.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.	June, 1956.
Brisbane	856	971	2,599	2,518	2,553	2,530	2,628	2,684
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,667	2,599	2,610	2,600	2,693	2,764
Rockhampton	895	1,012	2,639	2,592	2,593	2,588	2,677	2,698
Townsville	955	1,057	2,755	2,699	2,691	2,704	2,800	2,825
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,658	2,609	2,611	2,600	2,695	2,724
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,618	2,544	2,570	2,552	2,650	2,701
Warwick	846	1,000	2,677	2,609	2,631	2,619	2,693	2,765

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.
(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1956.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.	June, 1956.
Brisbane	829	1,454	3,135	3,150	3,143	3,136	3,128	3,134
Toowoomba	829	1,429	3,126	3,122	3,110	3,121	3,121	3,152
Rockhampton	845	1,477	3,133	3,163	3,151	3,127	3,124	3,129
Townsville	840	1,457	3,165	3,182	3,167	3,164	3,160	3,167
Bundaberg	839	1,447	3,151	3,133	3,128	3,156	3,151	3,170
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	3,137	3,151	3,143	3,137	3,130	3,138
Warwick	825	1,441	3,137	3,142	3,138	3,137	3,132	3,142